

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

788

October 15, 2018

The Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We write to urge immediate action by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to restore sufficiency and predictability to the Universal Service Fund (USF) High Cost program's budget. Full funding of the program, as designed, helps ensure that rural Kansans have access to high-quality, affordable broadband and voice services comparable to those available in urban areas as mandated by the Telecommunications Act of 1996. These services are necessary if rural communities are to compete in a global economy.

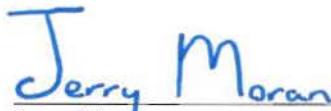
The insufficient and uncertain USF budget continues to hamper rural providers' efforts to strategically invest in rural broadband at a time when the federal government has made rural broadband a national priority. Therefore, we appreciated your commitment at the FCC oversight hearing held by the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee on August 16, 2018, to take action by the end of the year.

As you are aware, the USF High Cost program remains a critical tool for millions of rural Americans along with the economic competitiveness of rural businesses that the program aims to serve. Additionally, all four of the universal service initiatives rely on the health of this program's budget. However, the High Cost program's budget has remained at stagnant levels since 2011. It remains critical that all components of the USF evolve with innovations in technology while also accounting for inflationary adjustments in future budgets. Accordingly, the FCC's recent USF High Cost order and responses to its Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking reinforce the need for sufficient and predictable support for the long-term health of the program.

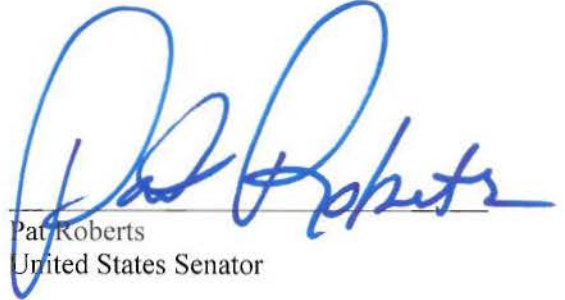
In Kansas, the budget control mechanism resulting from insufficient funding is estimated to eliminate support that carriers would otherwise have received for deployment of broadband by nearly \$13,000,000 over the 2018-2019 twelve-month period. As a result, providers need to postpone or even cancel broadband investments, which reduce the availability of rural broadband and increase consumer broadband rates in rural areas. These reductions also put at risk the ability of providers to pay back loans for investments already made. Nearly 50 percent of Kansas land mass is served by rural carriers, and their services remain invaluable to the rural communities they serve.

As mentioned in prior letters and in-person discussions emphasizing the importance of the USF High Cost program's budget, we urge the FCC to establish a sufficient and predictable budget that will eliminate the digital divide of broadband availability and affordability while recognizing the long-term benefits that these assets provide. We appreciate the Commission's thoughtful actions and acknowledgement of this vital program that assures affordable broadband for rural American consumers and businesses.

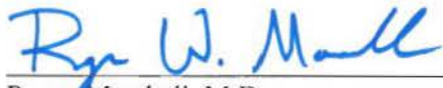
Sincerely,



Jerry Moran  
United States Senator



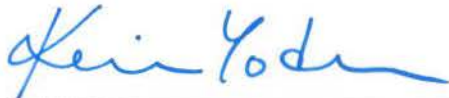
Pat Roberts  
United States Senator



Roger Marshall, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Lynn Jenkins, CPA  
Member of Congress



Kevin Yoder  
Member of Congress



Ron Estes  
Member of Congress



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

November 30, 2018

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
United State Senate  
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Moran:

Thank you for your letter on the importance of high-speed broadband access to rural Americans, including those in Kansas. Closing the digital divide is one of my top priorities, and I appreciate your recognition of our work thus far to foster broadband deployment in the most remote corners of our country.

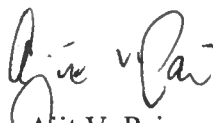
I agree with your concerns that budget limitations in the Universal Service Fund's high cost program for legacy rate-of-return providers could result in undue reductions in support for broadband deployment in Kansas. Those cuts were the legacy of the last Administration's *2016 Rate-of-Return Reform Order* (from which I dissented in part as a Commissioner).

We started to address this problem in March, when the Commission dedicated an additional \$500 million to support small, rural carriers deploying broadband to the farthest reaches of America. And I expect that we will finish our work in December. I have now circulated to my colleagues a proposed order that would reform our high-cost program for small carriers to increase its efficiency, its sufficiency, and its predictability, all while ensuring rural Americans get the high-quality services they need and deserve.

*First*, we're promoting efficiency by offering rate-of-return carriers opportunity to opt in to model-based support, which would give them a guaranteed revenue stream for a decade in exchange for meeting specified buildout requirements. *Second*, we're ensuring support is sufficient by offering additional funding to carriers that currently receive model-based support and who agree to meet increased buildout requirements. We're also increasing funding for carriers who do not receive model-based support. *Third*, we're making the program more predictable by setting a new long-term budget for rate-of-return carriers who choose not to opt in to model-based support and ending arbitrary funding cuts. And *fourth*, we're increasing the target speeds for subsidized deployments from 10/1 Mbps to 25/3 Mbps. Long story short, we're making the Universal Service Fund a more effective means of closing the digital divide.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

  
Ajit V. Pai

Hope all's well with you and your family! Really appreciate the support and your leadership on broadband for our state.



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

November 30, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts  
United State Senate  
109 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Roberts:

Thank you for your letter on the importance of high-speed broadband access to rural Americans, including those in Kansas. Closing the digital divide is one of my top priorities, and I appreciate your recognition of our work thus far to foster broadband deployment in the most remote corners of our country.

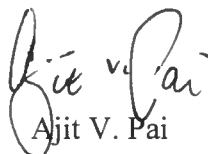
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Sincerely,

  
Ajit V. Pai

Hope all's well with you and the family, especially the grandkids, and that we have a chance to catch up soon!



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

November 30, 2018

The Honorable Kevin Yoder  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2433 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Yoder:

Thank you for your letter on the importance of high-speed broadband access to rural Americans, including those in Kansas. Closing the digital divide is one of my top priorities, and I appreciate your recognition of our work thus far to foster broadband deployment in the most remote corners of our country.

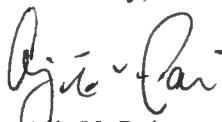
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Sincerely,

  
Ajit V. Pai

Very much appreciate your support during my chairmanship  
and admire your leadership on behalf of the 3<sup>rd</sup> District.



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

November 30, 2018

The Honorable Lynn Jenkins  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1526 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Jenkins:

Thank you for your letter on the importance of high-speed broadband access to rural Americans, including those in Kansas. Closing the digital divide is one of my top priorities, and I appreciate your recognition of our work thus far to foster broadband deployment in the most remote corners of our country.

I agree with your concerns that budget limitations in the Universal Service Fund's high cost program for legacy rate-of-return providers could result in undue reductions in support for broadband deployment in Kansas. Those cuts were the legacy of the last Administration's *2016 Rate-of-Return Reform Order* (from which I dissented in part as a Commissioner).

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I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

So grateful for your support  
during my time at the FCC,

Ajit V. Pai

your hospitality during our visit to Leavenworth, and your leadership on behalf of the 2<sup>nd</sup> District!





FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

November 30, 2018

The Honorable Roger Marshall  
U.S. House of Representatives  
312 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Marshall:

Thank you for your letter on the importance of high-speed broadband access to rural Americans, including those in Kansas. Closing the digital divide is one of my top priorities, and I appreciate your recognition of our work thus far to foster broadband deployment in the most remote corners of our country.

I agree with your concerns that budget limitations in the Universal Service Fund's high cost program for legacy rate-of-return providers could result in undue reductions in support for broadband deployment in Kansas. Those cuts were the legacy of the last Administration's *2016 Rate-of-Return Reform Order* (from which I dissented in part as a Commissioner).

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Sincerely,

  
Ajit V. Pai

Thanks so much for your support! Our shared goal of better broadband for the 1<sup>st</sup> District is so important. I hope you and your family are well and look forward to catching up soon.



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

November 30, 2018

The Honorable Ron Estes  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2452 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Estes:

Thank you for your letter on the importance of high-speed broadband access to rural Americans, including those in Kansas. Closing the digital divide is one of my top priorities, and I appreciate your recognition of our work thus far to foster broadband deployment in the most remote corners of our country.


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Sincerely,

  
Ajit V. Pai

Appreciate your support,  
both in the 4th District (still  
remember our visit to the 9/11 center in Wichita) and in Washington!  
Hope all's well and look forward to catching up soon.